

Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Priority Natural Communities

Terrestrial	Provi- sional Rank	Palustrine	Provi- sional Rank
Maritime Juniper Woodland/Shrubland	S1	Calcareous Basin Fen	S1
Maritime Oak - Holly Forest/Woodland	S1	Coastal Interdunal Marsh/Swale	S1
Maritime Pitch Pine On Dunes	S1	Estuarine Intertidal: Sea-Level Fen	S1
Sandplain Grassland	S1	Alluvial Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Sandplain Heathland	S1	Atlantic White Cedar Bog	S2
Scrub Oak Shrubland	S1	Black Ash Swamp	S2
Serpentine Outcrop Community	S1	Black Ash-Red Maple-Tamarack Calcareous Seepage Swamp	S2
Calcareous Forest Seep Community	S2	Black Gum Swamp	S2
Calcareous Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community	S2	Black Gum-Pin Oak-Swamp White Oak "Perched" Swamp	S2
Dry Riverside Bluff	S2	Calcareous Pondshore/Lakeshore	S2
Hickory - Hop Hornbeam Forest/Woodland	S2	Calcareous Seepage Marsh	S2
High Elevation Spruce - Fir Forest/Woodland	S2	Calcareous Sloping Fen	S2
Maritime Dune Community	S2	Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Maritime Erosional Cliff Community	S2	Coastal Plain Pondshore	S2
Maritime Rock Cliff Community	S2	Cobble Bar Forest	S2
Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community	S2	High-Terrace Floodplain Forest	S2
Ridgetop Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community	S2	Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Yellow Oak Dry Calcareous Forest	S2	Kettlehole Level Bog	S2
Circumneutral Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community	S2S3	Major-River Floodplain Forest	S2
Calcareous Rock Cliff Community	S3	Northern Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Calcareous Talus Forest/Woodland	S3	Riverside Seep	S2
Circumneutral Rock Cliff Community	S3	Small-River Floodplain Forest	S2
Circumneutral Talus Forest/Woodland	S3	Spruce-Tamarack Bog	S2
Coastal Forest/Woodland	S3	Transitional Floodplain Forest	S2
Maritime Beach Strand Community	S3	Acidic Graminoid Fen	S3
Maritime Shrubland Community	S3	Acidic Shrub Fen	S3
Rich, Mesic Forest Community	S3	Alluvial Red Maple Swamp	S3
Riverside Rock Outcrop Community	S3	High-Energy Riverbank	S3
Black Oak - Scarlet Oak Forest/Woodland	S3S4	Kettlehole Wet Meadow	S3
		Level Bog	S3
		Riverine Pointbar And Beach	S3
		Spruce-Fir Boreal Swamp	S3
Estuarine			
Estuarine Intertidal: Brackish Tidal Marsh	S1	Estuarine	
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Tidal Shrubland	S1	Estuarine Intertidal: Coastal Salt Pond Marsh	S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Tidal Swamp	S1	Estuarine Subtidal: Coastal Salt Pond	S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Freshwater Tidal Marsh	S1	Marine Intertidal: Rocky Shore	S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Flats	S2	Estuarine Intertidal: Salt Marsh	S3
Estuarine Subtidal: Fresh/Brackish Flats	S2	Estuarine Intertidal: Saline /Brackish Flats	S3

Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Priority Natural Communities

Natural Community Ranks

Each type of natural community is assigned an “element rank”, based on the species element ranking developed for the Natural Heritage system by The Nature Conservancy and maintained by NatureServe. The state rank (S) reflects the rarity and threat within Massachusetts. Every state assigns its own “S” rank based on the rarity and threat within that state, with regard to regional conditions. Global ranks for communities are not included because each state has its own classification system and the US National Vegetation Classification system uses a different system.

Massachusetts NHESP considers natural community types ranked S1, S2, and S3 to be a Priority for conservation, or Priority natural communities. Community types ranked S4 and S5 are more common, and only exemplary examples of these are tracked in the NHESP database.

State Ranks

S1 = Typically 5 or fewer occurrences, very few remaining individuals, acres, or miles of stream or especially vulnerable to extirpation in Massachusetts for other reasons.

S2 = Typically 6 - 20 occurrences, few remaining individuals, acres, or miles of stream or very vulnerable to extirpation in Massachusetts for other reasons.

S3 = Typically 21 - 100 occurrences, limited acreage, or miles of stream in Massachusetts.

S4 = Apparently secure in Massachusetts.

S5 = Demonstrably secure in Massachusetts

SU = Status unknown in Massachusetts.

SH = No extant sites known in Massachusetts, but it may still exist.